

Frank Nelson Wilcox

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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Summary Information

Repository	Ingalls Library and Museum Archives
Creator - Artist	Wilcox, Frank N. (Frank Nelson), 1887-1964
Title	Frank Nelson Wilcox drawings.
Date	1930
Extent	1.0 Linear feet
Language	English

Biographical/Historical note

Frank Nelson Wilcox was born into a distinguished old Brecksville family in 1887. Although raised in Cleveland he spent much of his formative years exploring the Brecksville area. He drew and sketched outdoor scenes from an early age. As a teenager he took Saturday morning art classes at the Cleveland School of Art under Frederick Gottwald and following graduation from Cleveland's Central High he enrolled at the art school where he studied with Henry Keller, Louis Rorimer, and Horace E. Potter. In 1910 he traveled to Europe on a scholarship, studying for a year at the Académie Colarossi in Paris where he was also accepted into the 1911 Salon. He returned to Cleveland to assume a teaching position at the Cleveland School of Art in 1913 where he became head of the landscape department and also taught life drawing, retiring in 1957. His students included Charles Burchfield, John Paul Miller, and Paul Travis. He also taught at the John Huntington Art and Polytechnic Institute.

By 1915 Wilcox was considered the foremost artist in Cleveland. Primarily an American scene painter, he worked in watercolors and oils. His works were exhibited in local art galleries and he was a regular contributor to the museum's May Show from 1919-1960. In addition to local exhibitions his work was featured in group exhibitions at the Kraushaar Galleries, Museum of Modern Art, and Whitney museum in New York; and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia.

Wilcox spent his summers traveling and painting in North America and Europe. He had a lifelong interest in the natural landscape of Ohio, and the history of the state and its native peoples. He loved the adventure of the Ohio Canal, painting it and recreating its history in his works. His intensity in his art was reflected in his approach to all subjects of interest to him. He studied anatomy, botany, and zoology; even reconstructing the bones of a dead horse he found in the countryside. These studies informed his painting and his work creating forensic models of an Ohio mound builder from an original skeleton. His interest in native cultures resulted in the book *Ohio Indian Trails* (1933). He published the book of sketches, *Weather Wisdom*, in 1950. He also built dioramas on the history of Cleveland for the Western Reserve Historical Society.

Although he studied in Paris at the dawn of the modern art movement he preferred the Old Masters of the Louvre. He was influenced by French impressionism and by Henry Keller's watercolor techniques. He experimented with impressionism but ultimately developed his own signature style. Wilcox was a founding and long-time member of the Cleveland Society of Artists. His works are held by the Cleveland Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum of Art, Toledo Museum of art, Butler Museum of American Art, San Diego Museum of Art, local libraries and schools; and private collections.

Scope and Contents note

This collection consists of two preparatory drawings for the oil painting The Bee Tree in the museum's collection (2012.119). Recalling an event that took place decades earlier during a family reunion on a farm in Brecksville, Ohio, this painting depicts the felling of a tree to extract a honeycomb in its trunk. The artist—who taught more than 40 years at his alma mater, the Cleveland School (now Institute) of Art—presents himself as the young man straddling the tree in the center of the composition. The painting and drawings were donated to the museum in 2012.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Ingalls Library and Museum Archives

Conditions Governing Access note

Open to the public. For more information or to access this collection contact archives staff at archives2@clevelandart.org.

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Gift of Richard A. Zellner, 2013

Controlled Access Headings

Personal Name(s)

- Wilcox, Frank N. (Frank Nelson), 1887-1964

Subject(s)

- Art -- Ohio -- Cleveland.
- Art, American -- Ohio -- 20th century.
- Artists -- Ohio -- Cleveland -- Biography.

- Cleveland Museum of Art.

Collection Inventory

	Folder
Preparatory drawing for The Bee Tree 1930	One
Preparatory drawing for The Bee Tree 1930	One